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**Commission on Population and Development**
**Forty-ninth session**
11-15 April 2016
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
**Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters**

# Report of the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development on its intersessional meetings

## I. Introduction

1. At its thirtieth session, in 1997, the Commission on Population and Development authorized its Bureau to hold intersessional meetings in preparation for its sessions on a yearly basis (see E/1997/25, para. 52). The Commission subsequently stressed the importance of making available written reports on those meetings at the earliest opportunity (see Commission decision 2005/2) and requested its Bureau to meet as frequently as necessary in preparation for the annual sessions of the Commission (see Commission resolution 2006/1).

2. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council decision 2015/252, in which the Council decided that at its forty-ninth session, in 2016, the Commission on Population and Development should review the functioning of its methods of work, the Chair of the Commission at its forty-ninth session decided to hold meetings of the Bureau starting in June 2015 to better prepare for the review. Thus, in accordance with resolution 2006/1, the Bureau held five meetings at United Nations Headquarters between June 2015 and January 2016, on the following dates: 30 June 2015, 15 September 2015, 10 November 2015, 17 December 2015 and 11 January 2016. At its fourth meeting, the Bureau decided to hold a fifth meeting, on 11 January 2016, devoted to the review of the methods of work of the Commission, and a sixth meeting, on 23 February 2016, to address remaining matters prior to the resumed session of the Commission, to be held from 11 to 15 April 2016.

3. The meetings of the Bureau were attended by the Chair, Mwaba Patricia Kasese-Bota of Zambia, or her representative (African Group), Ebrahim Alikhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Asia-Pacific Group), Oana Rebedea of Romania (Eastern European Group), Sara Luna (representing Patricia Chemor Ruiz) of Mexico (Latin American and Caribbean Group), and Nadine Skale of Germany

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(Western European and Others Group). Also present at these meetings were staff from the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Secretary of the Commission from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and representatives of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (as observers).

4. The present report summarizes the discussions of the Bureau at those meetings, including the conclusions reached and the recommendations made.

# II. Summary of the deliberations of the Bureau

## A. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission

5. At the conclusion of its forty-eighth session, the Commission recommended to the Economic and Social Council that the Commission review its future organization and methods of work at its forty-ninth session, in 2016. At its fifty-fifth plenary meeting, on 22 July 2015, the Council adopted the recommendation of the Commission and decided that at the forty-ninth session of the Commission, in 2016, the Commission should review the functioning of its methods of work with a view to further enhancing the impact of the work of the Commission and its contribution to the Council. The Council also requested the Secretariat, in consultation with Member States and UNFPA, to prepare a note for consideration by the Commission at its forty-ninth session on the future organization and methods of work of the Commission.

6. In accordance with the recommendation of the Commission and the decision of the Council, the Bureau of the forty-ninth session of the Commission began work on the review of the methods of work in mid-2015. At its first and second meetings, in June and September, the Bureau endorsed the following course of the consultation process for the review of the methods of work of the Commission: (a) a questionnaire to be sent by the Secretariat to all Member States; (b) a series of informal meetings with Member States by regional group; (c) at least one meeting open to all Member States. On 18 September, the Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, UNFPA and the regional commissions, sent a questionnaire on the methods of work to all Members States and a set of five open-ended questions on the same topic to relevant United Nations entities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. The questionnaires and questions were also posted on the website of the Population Division. The deadline for submitting responses in both cases was first set for 23 October 2015 and then extended to 30 October.

7. In addition, the Secretariat assisted all five Bureau members in organizing informal meetings with their respective regional groups to help Member States to provide early feedback to the Secretariat and to focus their answers in completing the questionnaire. The following meetings with regional groups were organized: (a) 9 October: meeting with the Western European and Others Group; (b) 10 October: meeting with the Asia-Pacific Group; (c) 12 October: meeting with the Eastern European Group; (d) 13 October: meeting with the Latin American and Caribbean Group; and (e) 14 October: meeting with the African Group. Furthermore, the Chair and the Director of the Population Division organized a meeting on the methods of work at United Nations Headquarters open to all Member States on 23 November.

The meeting was attended by representatives from nearly 70 Member States. Information from the questionnaire, the five open-ended questions, the meetings with the regional groups and the meeting with all Member States would inform the note by the Secretariat on the methods of work.

8. At its third meeting, on 10 November 2015, the Chair announced that she would table a resolution (or a decision) on the methods of work of the Commission. The Bureau welcomed the decision of the Chair.

9. At its fourth meeting, on 17 December 2015, the Bureau decided to hold a meeting on 11 January 2016 devoted exclusively to the review of the methods of work of the Commission, to be followed by an additional round of meetings with regional groups on the same topic. The following meetings were organized: 12 January (Western European and Others Group); 13 January (Latin American and Caribbean Group); 14 January (two separate meetings with the African Group and the Eastern European Group); and 15 January (Asia-Pacific Group).

10. At its fifth meeting, on 11 January 2016, the Director presented to the Bureau a proposed outline of the note by the Secretariat on the methods of work of the Commission. The Bureau welcomed the outline and agreed with the proposal to share it with all Member States during the regional consultations scheduled for later in the week.

## B. Organization of work for the forty-ninth session of the Commission

11. On the basis of the provisional agenda for the forty-ninth session adopted by the Commission at the conclusion of the forty-eighth session, the Bureau approved a draft organization of work for the forty-ninth session and recommended it for adoption by the Commission. Given the link between agenda items 5 and 7, the Bureau decided to consider them jointly on Thursday morning, 14 April. This should be followed by the adoption of a resolution (or decision) on the methods of work on Thursday morning. The adoption of the resolution on the special theme on strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda and other decisions was scheduled to take place on Friday afternoon, 15 April. Secondly, in accordance with this proposal, the Bureau decided to schedule agenda item 6, "Programme implementation and future programme of work of the Secretariat in the field of population", for the morning of Friday, 15 April. Thirdly, the Bureau decided to schedule two 60-minute keynote presentations, including interactive debates on Monday, 11 April, and Tuesday, 12 April, from noon to 1 p.m. An expert panel and interactive discussion would take place on Wednesday, 13 April, from 3 to 4.30 p.m. In drafting the provisional organization of work, the Bureau attempted to balance the work in the plenary with informal consultations, providing time slots on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon devoted exclusively to the informal consultations, with no overlap with the plenary session. The Bureau noted, however, that it was always the prerogative of the facilitator(s) to decide on the correct timing of informal consultations. In the light of the need for informal consultations to consider both a draft resolution on the special theme and a draft resolution (or decision) on the methods of work, the Bureau decided to begin informal consultations on the draft proposals two weeks prior to the resumption of the session. At the fifth Bureau meeting, the Bureau therefore decided to begin informal consultations on Tuesday, 29 March 2016. During the first week of informal consultations, the focus would be

on the draft resolution (or decision) on the methods of work. Informal consultations on the special theme and any other decisions were tentatively scheduled to begin on Monday, 4 April.

## C. Opening statements and special guest

12. In keeping with the practice of recent years, the Bureau endorsed the proposal by the Chair to invite the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNFPA and the Director of the Population Division to speak at the opening of the forty-ninth session. In view of the special theme of the session, the Chair proposed also to invite the Chair of the Statistical Commission to make a brief statement under agenda item 3, to underline the importance of the work of the Commission in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## D. Keynote speakers

13. In its decision 2005/2, the Commission welcomed the format of inviting keynote speakers to address the sessions of the Commission and requested the Bureau to make the necessary arrangements for their participation and to inform States members of the Commission accordingly. Pursuant to that decision, the Bureau decided that two individuals would be invited to address the Commission during the designated times slots on Monday, 11 April, and Tuesday, 12 April. On Monday morning, the keynote speaker would address the following topic: "The demographic evidence base and indicators for the 2030 Agenda: a global overview", whereas on Tuesday morning, the keynote speaker would focus on the topic "Integration of traditional and new data sources and technologies: from censuses to big data". The Bureau also decided to organize an expert panel to be followed by an interactive discussion of four speakers (with a moderator) during the designated time slot on Wednesday, 13 April, to address the topic of "Uses of the demographic evidence base for development policy and programme planning and monitoring".

14. For each speaking role, the Bureau agreed on a slate of at least two candidates, ranked in order of preference, and requested that the Secretariat invite the speakers. It was agreed that should one or more of the preferred speakers not be available, the Secretariat would proceed through the list until an available speaker was identified and confirmed. The Bureau requested that the Secretariat accord high priority to achieving gender balance, broad regional representation and diversity of expertise in compiling the slate of speakers and panellists. Also, the Secretariat would keep the Chair and other Bureau members well informed about this process as it unfolded.

## E. Participation of relevant United Nations entities in the forty-ninth session of the Commission

15. The Bureau noted that the topic of the forty-ninth session was relevant to the work of many entities of the United Nations system. With this in mind, it was agreed that the Chair would inform all relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system of the dates and the theme of the session and encourage them to participate actively and to consider organizing side events during the session.

## F. Communication of the Chair with all Member States, including members of the Commission

16. The Bureau requested the Chair to write to all Member States informing them of the importance of the forthcoming session, especially with a view to the special theme and its contribution to the ongoing discussion on the population-related elements of the new development agenda. In addition, the Chair would inform Member States that the forty-ninth session would consider future methods of work of the Commission and discuss how to make the Commission function more effectively. Thus, the Commission may discuss ways and means to better contribute to the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and to the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Chair was also asked to inform Member States about how to access preliminary versions of the documentation for the session, to provide an overview of the different agenda items of the session and to encourage delegations, in accordance with resolution 2006/1, to invite technical experts to join their delegations. In the communication to members of the Commission, the Chair would also explain the schedule of informal consultations and provide more detail on keynote presentations and the panel discussion.

## G. Relationship between the Commission and the Economic and Social Council

17. The Bureau agreed that the President of the Economic and Social Council would make a contribution to the work of the forty-ninth session of the Commission and requested the Chair of the Bureau to invite him to launch the discussion on agenda item 5, "General debate on the contribution of population and development issues to the Economic and Social Council theme in 2016 on 'Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results'".

## H. Themes for future sessions of the Commission

18. The Bureau recalled decision 2015/101 of the Commission, by which the Commission had decided (a) that the special theme for its forty-ninth session would be "Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda" and (b) to postpone the decision on the special theme for its fiftieth session, in 2017, until its forty-ninth session pending the decision of the Council on its annual theme for 2017. In deciding on a theme, the Bureau took note of the themes that the Commission had covered in the recent past as well as known events and activities in other relevant bodies of the United Nations, especially the General Assembly.

19. Given that the Economic and Social had not yet decided its annual theme for 2017, Bureau members requested that a decision on the Bureau's recommendation to the Commission regarding the special theme of the fiftieth session be postponed until the spring of 2016, once the annual theme of the Council for 2017 had been decided. For the special theme of the Commission in 2018, the Bureau decided to recommend that the Commission postpone its decision until 2017, in order to align the theme of the Commission with the annual theme of the Council and the cycle of review of the Sustainable Development Goals in the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

## I. Resolutions and decisions

20. The Bureau recommended that the Commission consider adopting the following resolutions and decisions: (a) a decision on the special theme for the fiftieth session in 2017, and a decision on the postponement of the decision on the theme for the fifty-first session in 2018; (b) a decision on the provisional agenda for the fiftieth session in 2017; (c) a resolution on the special theme of the forty-ninth session; and (d) a resolution (or decision) on the methods of work of the Commission.

21. Thus, the Chair requested the Secretariat to assist in the preparation of a zero draft of the resolution on the special theme, drawing on the main conclusions of the reports of the Secretary-General prepared for the session, also taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other key elements of the ongoing discussion about the 2030 Agenda, including the indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets at the global level. In addition, the Secretariat would prepare drafts of the procedural decisions on the special theme for the fiftieth session in 2017 and for the fifty-first session in 2018 and on the provisional agenda for the fiftieth session in 2017.

22. The Chair also requested the Secretariat to assist in the preparation of a zero draft of a resolution (or decision) on the methods of work of the Commission. The zero draft would be informed by the note by the Secretariat on the methods of work and the report of the Secretary-General on the critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, as mandated by the General Assembly in paragraph 90 of its resolution 70/1.

23. The Chair planned to distribute the zero draft of the resolution (or decision) on the methods of work of the Commission on Monday, 7 March, followed by the distribution of the zero draft of the procedural decisions and the resolution on the special theme on Monday, 14 March.

## J. Availability of documents for the Commission

24. The Bureau stressed the importance of the timely availability of documents for the forty-ninth session of the Commission to facilitate the preparation of statements by delegations. Therefore, the Bureau endorsed the posting on the Internet of unedited, English-only versions of all Commission documents as soon as they become available, in advance of their release in the six official languages of the United Nations.

## K. Briefings for Member States

25. The Bureau recommended that three briefings be held in New York in preparation for the forty-ninth session, with the following tentative dates: (a) briefing on organizational matters and logistics (7 March); (b) briefing on thematic reports (22 March); and (c) briefing for NGOs (5 April).

## L. Participation of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

26. According to the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and Council resolution 1996/31, NGOs may

participate in the annual session of the Commission. The Bureau agreed that, as in prior years, the Secretariat would host a web page, in collaboration with the NGO Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for the purpose of registering participants affiliated with NGOs in consultative status with the Council. The web page would also contain detailed instructions for submitting written and oral statements before the session. The web page would go live on 11 November 2015 and remain open until 31 March 2016.

27. The submission of NGO written statements would be accepted from 11 November until 11 December. The first 20 NGO statements received would be issued by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management as official documents, without formal editing, but translated into the three working languages of the Council (English, French and Spanish). As in previous years, the Secretariat would review and lightly edit the written statements, as needed. Submission of requests to deliver oral statements would be possible from 11 November 2015 until 8 April 2016. The inclusion of NGO presenters on the list of speakers would be made on a "first come, first served" basis and would depend on the time available. There would be no guarantees that an oral statement could be delivered at the session.

## III. Recommendations of the Bureau

28. **The Bureau recommended the adoption of the draft organization of work for the forty-ninth session of the Commission.**

29. **The Bureau decided that two keynote speakers and a panel of four experts and one moderator would be invited to address the Commission on various aspects of the special theme of the forty-ninth session, "Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda".**

30. **The Bureau requested that the Chair inform all relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system of the dates and the special theme of the session and encourage them to participate actively therein and to consider organizing side events during the session.**

31. **The Bureau requested that the Chair write to all members of the Commission to inform them of the dates of the session and to remind them of the special theme, suggesting under which agenda item interventions were welcome, informing them about how to access preliminary versions of the documentation for the session and underscoring the desirability of having technical experts as part of their delegations. In addition, the Chair would inform members of the Commission about the keynote speakers and panellists and about the dates for the informal consultations on draft proposals and any other relevant information concerning those consultations.**

32. **The Bureau requested that the Chair write to States not members of the Commission to inform them of the dates and the theme of the session and to provide information on how to access preliminary versions of the documentation for the session.**

33. **The Bureau decided to invite the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNFPA and the Director of the Population Division to participate in the opening of the forty-ninth session of the Commission. In addition, the**

**Bureau decided to invite the Chair of the Statistical Commission to address the Commission under item 3 of the provisional agenda and to invite the President of the Economic and Social Council to address the Commission under item 5 of the provisional agenda.**

34. **The Bureau recommended that the Commission consider adopting the following resolutions and decisions: (a) a decision on the special theme for the fiftieth session in 2017, and a decision on the postponement of the decision on the theme for the fifty-first session in 2018; (b) a decision on the provisional agenda for the fiftieth session in 2017; (c) a resolution on the special theme of the forty-ninth session; and (d) a resolution or decision on the Commission's methods of work. It proposed informal consultations beginning on Tuesday, 29 March 2016 on the draft resolution (or decision) on the methods of work, followed by consultations on the draft resolution on the special theme beginning on Monday, 4 April.**

35. **The Bureau recommended that the Commission postpone its decision on the special theme for its fifty-first session in 2018 until its fiftieth session in 2017, while postponing until the spring of 2016 a decision on its recommendation to the Commission regarding the special theme of the fiftieth session, in order to align the theme of the Commission with the annual theme of Economic and Social Council.**

36. **The Bureau recommended that unedited, English-only versions of all Commission documents be posted on the Internet as soon as they became available, in advance of their release in the six official languages of the United Nations.**

37. **The Bureau requested the Secretariat to organize three briefings prior to the resumption of the forty-ninth session of the Commission, with the following tentative dates: (a) briefing on organizational matters and logistics (7 March); (b) briefing on thematic reports (22 March); and briefing for NGOs (5 April). In addition, the Bureau requested the Secretariat to organize an informal retreat on the thematic reports of the session as well as the note by the Secretariat on the methods of work. The retreat, if a venue and sponsor could be found, was scheduled to be held on 3 March 2016.**

38. **As in previous years, the Bureau endorsed the proposal of the Secretariat to host a web page for the registration of NGOS in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, in collaboration with the NGO Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The web page would go live on 11 November 2015 and remain open until 31 March 2016. The submission of NGO written statements would be accepted from 11 November until 11 December, whereas the submission of requests to deliver oral statements would be accepted from 11 November 2015 until 8 April 2016. The inclusion of NGO presenters on the list of speakers would be made on a "first come, first served" basis and would depend on the time available. There would be no guarantees that an oral statement could be made at the session.**